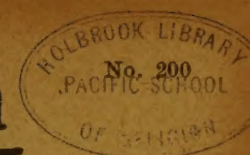


The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM



January 26th, 1944

DEAR MEMBER,

All reflections about national greatness, which was the subject of the last News-Letter, will be far astray if we forget that it is from two of the smallest countries in the world, Greece and Palestine, that most of the decisive contributions to European life and destiny have come. It is quite possible that in the midst of the present war in a country as small and, in the political sense, as powerless as Norway, new spiritual forces are being released which if we can apprehend them may be of greater promise for the future than much that is happening elsewhere.

THE NORWEGIAN CHURCH

Two recently published books on the Norwegian Church are well worth their small cost. One is the war-time letters and speeches of Bishop Berggrav.¹ The other² consists of the letters which passed between the bishops and the ministers of the Government of occupation, arranged with other documents to give a chronological account of the struggle of the Norwegian Church.

Through the short crisp sentences of the first book there speaks a man who is a patriot, a scholar, and until the outbreak of war a leading figure in the ecumenical movement. When the Germans made their sudden attack on Norway and all was confusion for many weeks, Bishop Berggrav was loudly accused, by those who were not there to know the facts, of being a collaborationist and a traitor. From the first he did his utmost to restrain passionate outbursts and useless sacrifice. "What counts," he said in a broadcast to the nation, "is not to dare to the limit, but to stand firm and hold out. The dramatic is not the conclusive." Against a loose optimism and an emotional desire to strike back blindly at the fate which threatened them, Bishop Berggrav set before the people of Norway a clear challenge to Christian endurance rooted in faith in God and in the power of Christ.

The other book shows a different aspect of the struggle. When the occupation took place the bishops were assured that the occupying power would maintain law and order and leave the Church free to carry on its work and witness. Their position was that of Luther, "The secular regime has laws which do not extend beyond life and property and all concrete things in the world. God will not grant to any one but Himself the right to govern souls." What is remarkable is the swiftness and unanimity of perception with which they saw in such initial encroachments as the demand of the police that the clergy

¹ *With God in the Darkness*. By Elvind Berggrav, Bishop of Oslo. Hodder and Stoughton, 5s.

² *The Norwegian Church Struggle*. Foreword by the Bishop of Chichester. Hodder and Stoughton, 1s. 3d.

should break their oath of silence, an unlawful incursion of the temporal power into the domain of God. It is frequently asserted that Lutheranism in Germany handed over the Christian conscience to the State—yet here were Lutherans who saw clearly where the line was to be drawn. At a moment of crisis a clear and definite lead was given. Throughout the long negotiations between the bishops and the State Department, which ended in the resignation of all the bishops and most of the clergy, the people of the congregations throughout Norway were brought into active participation through the pastoral letters read and circulated among them.

THE ENGLISH SITUATION

Two letters of comment on the article by Professor Polanyi, summarized in the Supplement to C.N.-L. No. 197, have come from correspondents closely in touch with working-class life. While agreeing with much in the article, they hold that what he says about the disintegration in the period between the two wars and the renaissance that followed Dunkirk, though it may be true of some sections of society, does not apply to the great mass of ordinary, for the most part inarticulate, people. Working-class opinion as a whole did not become cynical after the last war or lose its sense of moral values, and what is said about the renaissance since Dunkirk seems still more open to question. What one of our correspondents who has wide opportunities of observation says about this last point is as follows:—

“There was after Dunkirk the usual British reaction of increasing solidarity in the face of danger; it was in historical terms very important, but in the main was the same as what happened in the last war. There was, indeed, the seed of something more—of a real recapturing of belief in the possibilities of national life and national achievement. But how far did this more positive reaction go, and how permanent has it been? The important thing to see, which Professor Polanyi seems entirely to have missed, is that the *positive* side of the national renaissance—the real belief in the possibility of national achievement—was crushed *almost at birth*. There was for a time a real belief, democratic in the best sense, that the nation was concerned to use its resources in the common interest; there was a real sense of experiment and adventure in a common cause.

“Unfortunately this sense was very short-lived. The Government handling of the Beveridge Report was not re-assuring. It was quickly felt by ordinary people (whether rightly or wrongly) that the Government, in fact, did not mean business and there developed an almost exaggerated sense of fatalism—that *just because* the Beveridge scheme was a step towards justice it would have no chance of coming into being.

“The same thing happened on the industrial plane. The new powers given to Trade Unions, the joint production committees and so on, did not come up to original expectations. In some cases this was undoubtedly due to the deliberate opposition of employers. In other cases it was probably due to the unavoidable intricacy of the machinery involved. There was opportunity for endless delay. Unions and shop stewards brought up numbers of points requiring attention in the interests of output and health—but nothing happened. The employers could always give perfectly good reasons *on paper* for delay,

usually by throwing blame on to Government Departments. But there gradually grew up an increasing conviction that nothing would be done which infringed in any way business interests. This is not just the view of the few who are politically conscious, but is becoming increasingly the *effective* belief of ordinary industrial workers of all types.

"The major symptom of this sense of frustration has been the serious increase in strike action of recent months. This has been too wide-spread to be attributed merely to the work of a few agitators. Undoubtedly those who are agitators (by profession or temperament) have been involved, but their influence would have had little effect if it had not been for the background of exasperation to which I have referred. Further, the strikes are not just a matter of irresponsibility on the part of workers. They have happened among some of the industrial groups most conscious of their importance in the national effort, and most deliberate in their opposition to the Nazi regime. There have been strikes 'with a divided conscience,' but none the less they have taken place. I think the temper of mind behind them can best be understood by a middle-class person by considering the analogy of a customer who is convinced that a shopkeeper is consistently cheating him out of his due, but every time he questions the shopkeeper's actions, he is met with the reply that 'it's unpatriotic to complain.' It is easy to see how, after a time, the sight of someone apparently sheltering behind the excuse of 'patriotism' rouses an increasing sense of grievance. That is much what happens in the industrial field. The final incident which precipitates a strike is often trivial, but it is built on a long history of grievances which, in the opinion of the workers, have been evaded. Of course, if all the factors were known it might not look like that at all; frequently the employer is acting with right fully on his side, but the facts are not known, and the sense of cynicism grows.

"Where does this leave us? As I see it, in a position not a whit better than that before 1939. 'Civic indifference, a view that to the common people it does not matter who governs the country, was eating its way into the national fibre.' If that was true then, it is even more true now. The long-lived National Government and the political truce have bred a generation of 'political illiterates,' with no experience whatever of practical political life and responsibility. That in itself is a new and serious thing in this country. The apparent frustration, even under the stimulus of war, of that sense of responsibility and real democratic endeavour which sprang up immediately after the coming into power of the Churchill Government, has been a real disaster. Perhaps the most important factor is the growing sense that if commercial and business interests are able to delay and obstruct as much as appears possible *even in war time*, then the hope of real advance in peace time is slender indeed. Again, it is not so much a matter of whether obstruction has taken place, but that folk *believe that it has*, and that belief is breeding a profound and stubborn cynicism. It is still not true to call this *moral* disintegration—though it is the occasion of such disintegration. The background of common decency, moral restraint and all to which Professor Polanyi draws attention is still there, and is sufficiently strong, at any rate among ordinary responsible working folk, to be made the basis of a real national renaissance. But to imagine that the renaissance *has taken place* is to indulge in the most dangerously optimistic fantasy."

MEMORIAL TO DR. WILLIAM PATON

The many friends of Dr. William Paton will be glad to know that steps are being taken to establish a memorial in gratitude for his life and work. It is proposed to raise a fund to further the understanding, co-operation and friendship between Christians and Churches of different countries, to the promotion of which his life was given; in particular, the fund will be used to facilitate visits by representative churchmen to other countries. Those who are interested can obtain fuller information on application to the Rev. Hugh Martin, D.D., Annandale, North End Road, London, N.W. 11.

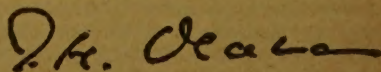
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A full understanding of what Dr. Reeves says in this important paper would place the whole present controversy about religious education in a new setting. There are many questions relating to religious education in schools with which she does not attempt to deal; she wisely concentrates attention on one vital aspect, which is so consistently ignored that the whole subject is apt to be seen in a false perspective.

The present debate turns to a large extent on the provision that in State schools (in which two-thirds of our children are being educated—a proportion which is certain to grow), religious instruction must not include any catechism or formulary distinctive of any particular denomination. Dr. Reeves invites a radical consideration of the prior question of the effectiveness of any form of religious instruction that is not related to the actual experience of those who are taught. Where no living experience is stimulated or evoked, teaching falls on an unreceptive and barren soil. Appreciation of this basic truth affects our whole attitude to religious instruction in both State and denominational schools.

For the time being there is nothing for it but to accept the best compromise attainable in the present state of public opinion. But when the Bill is on the Statute Book, Christians need to settle down to think out the whole question of religious education at a new and deeper level. No better aid in this task could be provided than Dr. Reeves' fresh and challenging contribution.

Yours sincerely,



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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

By MARJORIE REEVES

We are still suffering from a confusion of thought between religious instruction and religious education, so that when religious education is mentioned people instinctively think in terms of tabloid doses of intellectual teaching to be administered to the mind at stated intervals. The present controversy increases this tendency by focusing attention on the teaching given in one small portion of the day. We must grasp two facts. First, religious education is not an extra dose which we may or may not choose to administer to our children. Whether we like it or not, children will inevitably receive "religious" education from the adults around them. Secondly, this education goes on *all the time*, in all the various societies in which a child grows up. We cannot, for our own peace of mind, confine it to certain selected moments when we are consciously trying to instruct the child in the "right things." Nor is there, for adult or child, any "right of withdrawal" from "religious education."

By "religious" education I mean here nurture in the faith by which a group (or an individual) really lives. Everyone lives by a faith: each of us believes certain ends in life to be good, certain things to be worth having or doing. In every-day life we are constantly choosing between this or that "good," e.g. in our use of money or time, in our choice of job or friends, and these choices embody our *real* faith—not that in which we profess belief, but that by which we really live. From these every-day choices, from attitudes and casual conversations, even from facial expressions and gestures, children are continually imbibing the values of the adults around them. This is their "religious" education. It cannot be selected especially for them, since it arises out of the essential life of the group (or individual). It goes deeper than intellectual propositions, for values are apprehended first with the emotions, and such learning alone moves the will and becomes a basis for action. It takes place essentially through active personal relations, for it is by living and doing with people that their values are picked up. This education cannot be avoided: wherever more mature persons are influencing less mature, there, in a certain sense, is "religious" education.

Of course, this does not necessarily include the teaching of a full, coherent belief about the nature of life, and therefore perhaps it ought not strictly to be called religious education. Yet the transmission of values *which become a basis for choice and action* is a part of religious

education (often the only part received), for it is part of the process by which the young acquire a faith (good or bad) for living. This is my reason for describing it as "religious" education.

A DIVERSITY OF SOCIETIES

This education takes place in a variety of societies of differing character and function. It is a principle of fundamental importance that these should not be made to conform to one type. Each society, from its composition, relationships and functions, has to evolve the law of its own being. The character of the education a child receives in each must, therefore, differ; but ideally certain basic assumptions, a certain common outlook on life, should underlie and unify them all. The main educative societies form an outgoing pattern: home, school, local community, and (for the Christian) Church.

The home is the fundamental, God-given society: small, intimate, but mixed in age-range, based on very deep common assumptions, ruled not by the laws of an institution but by the delicate operations of personal relations. In spite of much surface variety there is a deep homogeneity in the experience of a true family, an underlying "taken-for-grantedness." From the Christian family there should be two outgoing paths. One is into the ordinary mixed world of men, and the pathway to this is the school. This is the first society in which the child has to stand on his own feet, and make his way on his own merits as one among a lot of contemporaries. He is no longer unique, but must share with the rest of this accidentally-gathered group the teacher's attention, the amenities of the school, etc.

A good school will, of course, treat its members as persons, but from its very nature its relationships are less personal and intimate than those of the family, and this is good. The law of the school is more institutional, the teacher's influence is different from the parent's, the child may claim no special position. Above all, the school is a *mixed* society. Its members come usually from every variety of home and so with every kind of basic assumption. The school, of course, seeks to work out a common basis and pattern for its community life; but fundamentally it starts, as a rule, not from homogeneous experience, but heterogeneous, and it will only achieve a sound education in so far as it recognizes and builds on this variety. It must see itself, in fact, as the world in microcosm, as a society where every variety of attitude, pagan and Christian, will meet, but—and this is a major point—as a society which, just because it is made up of persons, must transmit values, and therefore must give "religious" education. In a few cases, perhaps, the school can claim to start from a homogeneous experience (e.g. a Roman Catholic School in an Irish quarter of Liverpool), but in England, whilst probably true in the past, this cannot often be claimed to-day, and to assume one common background where in fact there is the greatest possible mixture is to ruin all chances of real education.

The mistake made by many advocates of the non-provided schools is to assume that one is given in school so many more or less blank, uniform minds on which must be written the correct denominational teaching, and then the job is done. But if one stops for a moment to consider the variety of home and street experience which makes up the major part of life for the forty or so children listening to a Scripture lesson in a typical Church school, it is clear that to try to plaster one denominational pattern over the top of this confusion is quite false. The outstanding fact about society to-day is its great confusion of values, and therefore the real task of the school is to create community out of recognized and accepted differences, an experience which is a preparation for the local community and the wider world of men.

On the other hand, the path lies from the Christian home into the Christian Church. The Church has to be seen as the family of families. From the natural family with its common basic assumptions, the child should grow into this wider society which yet has the same characteristic that it is based on fundamental common assumptions. So it is also a closely knit, homogeneous society in one sense, though in another embracing a great variety. Its education is received primarily through taking part in its characteristic activities, through doing things with people, not sitting at desks in school. "In our family we do this": "in our Church we do this." Truth is thus apprehended emotionally and actively before it is understood intellectually. True churchmanship can only be taught within the real community of the Church.

Thus the family is the natural given community, the school is the "fortuitous" community that introduces into the general world, the Church is the worshipping community called out from the world by God. Each of these has its own characteristic education governed by its own nature and distinct from that of the others. Thus the school is not the Church—nor the fishpond of the Church—but a community *in its own right* which, whatever its historical origins, does not now exist primarily to feed the Church, since in our present civilization it fulfils a perfectly valid secular function which gives it an important place quite apart from the Church. But can we then find any common assumptions which will harmonize the "religious" education given in home, school, Church and local community?

Certainly that harmony does not exist to-day; hence the chaos of "religious" education. The clash of values in this semi-pagan society creates tensions and contradictions on every hand for children. The materialist "goods" worshipped at home and the competitive life of the local community may fundamentally contradict the values taught at school; or again, the whole view-point of the science teaching in school may contradict the Church's teaching on God the Creator and man His creature. Can we seek any harmony of values in a society which is half-pagan, half-Christian? Or must we be content to bring up a Christian minority in conflict with the values of their secular education?

COMMON FUNDAMENTAL EXPERIENCES

The clash of values between the general life of society and the Christian assumptions opens too vast a field to be tackled here, but taking the smaller field of home and school, I believe it is possible to find certain values which for the Christian are derived directly from the Christian doctrine of man, but which he shares with a sufficiently large number of other people to make them a really common basis for this education in values which I have called "religious." These can be put in the form of certain fundamental experiences which must be built into home and school life.

(a) *The experience of comprehending the natural world as a universe of law and order which is "given" to man and upon which he is, in one sense, dependent, for he can only work on given materials with their own laws which he must obey, and he cannot create unless he accepts the limitations which the laws of the universe impose upon him. This experience should issue in an attitude which, in a growing awareness of a reality beyond and behind nature, contemplates the universe with wonder and humility even whilst seeking to understand and to use it.*

(b) *The experience of living in human societies which seek to express in their own life something of this same principle of law and order (e.g. in everyday home life a right place and use and time for everything) and in which law is administered by a trustworthy, consistent authority, whether parent or teacher, upon whom the child can rely for an understandable and unchanging discipline. (The antithesis to this—an experience of chaos and disorder and subjection to an arbitrary adult who cajoles one minute and slaps the next—is, from the Christian point of view, the most profoundly damaging experience that can be given, for it is on this early experience that the child builds up his first view of the universe and its ruler.)*

(c) *The experience of being loved as a unique person, and loving other persons for themselves. First, the child must discover that in this given pattern of law and order there is a unique place for himself: that he is loved for his own sake, given scope to develop his own powers and a chance to make his own unique contribution. The experience of being loved is fundamental to religious education. Moreover, satisfying space, scope, materials and adult attention are needed by the clamorous individualist as a basis for later self-limitation. But the essence of the matter is to move on to the second stage when, having received love, one gives it, and having enjoyed one's own "space" one recognizes the "space" of others. This is where the otherness and self-discipline is gradually embraced under the compulsion of love. Thus the child with its strong individualistic impulses is built up into a true community of persons.*

(d) *The experience of understanding and embracing one's daily work as a significant and worthy service to the community, and of accepting the responsibility and limitation which this involves. (This is an impor-*

tant stage in growing-up, and if the acceptance of work is to be on a truly personal level, the individual must understand something of the whole of which his job is an essential part.) Work may or may not give creative self-expression, but it must give an experience of social significance and purpose. This part of education obviously belongs mainly to the wider community life, and although it begins in home and school it is doubtful if these can get far against the prevailing values of society.

(e) *The experience of coming to understand that to which you belong.* The kind of education we are envisaging means nurture in the accepted habits and values of a society, whether home, school, locality, nation or Church. To give security this upbringing in an established pattern of life is essential, but to train in habits and condition the emotions blindly is to enslave the individual. Education in an accepted way of life must be brought to a point of conscious focus in the mind and that which has been implicit throughout be made explicit. This means explanation of the "pattern" of the community; and honest exposition of its values and faith, encouragement of criticism and of an independent appraisal of its purpose and activities. Above all, it means the encouragement of acceptance or rejection at the highest possible level of personal awareness and understanding. This education applies in different forms to all kinds of communities. It seeks to give an experience of clear-sighted, critical *membership*, by striking a just balance between intellectual and emotional education.

(f) *The experience of solitariness.* When all has been said about fitting into and understanding one's pattern, there remains, paradoxically, the necessity of training in aloneness. To be a true member of any community one must be able to swing right out of it, to withdraw into solitude. The child needs a chance for solitude, respect for his aloofness, help in facing his aloneness, and training in the toleration of other people's solitarinesses and peculiarities. This stands in direct contrast to the escape into mass experience and feverish conformity so common to-day.

I have deliberately tried to describe these values in general terms because I think they would be acceptable in that form to many "humanists," whilst obviously preparing the ground for specific Christian truth. Their applications can be very varied, e.g. in youth clubs as well as in home and school. Whilst serving as common ideals in the upbringing of children in many types of home, they can in the Christian home lead on to specific Christian teaching. But as the school is the battleground at the moment we may look a little more closely at the applications there. I would emphasize again that in the very nature of things, because it is a society of persons in which the immature are being influenced by the more mature, the school is continually giving "religious" education, far more through its everyday curriculum and relationships than in any special period of "Scripture." It is into the whole life of the school that we have to build this common heritage of values.

THE SCHOOL AS A COMMUNITY OF PERSONS

We may consider the school, for our purpose, under two heads. First, as a community of persons. Under this heading come its authority and discipline, its personal relations, its encouragement of competition or co-operation, above all, the quality of the classroom community. In a hundred and one minute details of classroom affairs, children are getting good or bad experience of a most fundamental kind. That is why the size of classes must be treated as an important issue by Christians. What is at stake is not the efficient teaching of subjects, but a true experience of persons as against mass discipline and an externally imposed law.

AS AN INTERPRETER OF PATTERNS

Secondly, the school is the interpreter of patterns. This is peculiarly the function of the school on the intellectual side. We must throw overboard the conception of the curriculum as made up of subjects which will be "useful" for some ulterior end (e.g. getting a better job). The purpose of the curriculum is that the child should understand the world to which he belongs at the highest possible level of personal awareness. The school, starting from the child, has to interpret his experience in an outgoing sequence: himself and his body, the natural world and its laws, the home, the street, the village or town, the workshop, and the wider patterns of national and international order. The child must grasp the order and purpose of his world, and see the significance of his part in the whole.

This task falls particularly to the school because it is the society that introduces him to the larger world. At present, it seems, few schools really see this task and consequently many children are plunged from home into the paralysing experience of confusion, meaninglessness and hugeness, which the life of a big city gives them.

We must note that interpretation includes not only explanation of the patterns, but also discussion and assessment of their meaning and values. The school is not a true guide and interpreter if it avoids examination of meaning, and tries to stick to the teaching of "facts" (it will fail anyhow). It is the school's job in every subject to link information with meaning and purpose. Thus critical discussion and appraisal of values should occur at appropriate points throughout the curriculum.

The study of the Bible, of Christian doctrine and of Church history comes in at this point. This is part of the inheritance and pattern of all children in this country, and as such belongs like history and geography to their education. This is very easy to see: Churches are an obvious geographical, and religious practices a common social, feature of the environment, which clearly demand explanation. So, assuming no

common upbringing in the Christian faith, there is yet a place in the school curriculum for a systematic study of the Christian faith; that is, an account of what Christians believe, including their differences. This should be taught, if possible, by teachers who practise a definite churchmanship, and who draw freely on the differing experiences of churchmanship to be found in the average class. This study of Christianity must be seen as part of "understanding one's pattern." The spontaneous discussion of Christianity, like politics, in youth clubs shows that it is a live issue to the adolescent. Therefore, such discussion should also find a place in the school or the adolescent stage. But it must be based on a recognition of the present confusion in the experience of the young on the facts of the differing denominations and the presence of the agnostic. Each member of the group should be invited to make the contribution of his churchmanship or his scepticism to the discussion, and the teacher must interpret and guide rather than impose authoritatively his own form of Christianity.

WORSHIP IN THE SCHOOL

Can we then seek for no more specific religious experience in school than those outlined above? Not unless it genuinely arises out of the life of the school. For the Christian the highest activity of any community of persons is common worship, but "morning exercises" in school may be of as little real significance as a top-dressing of prayers in a youth club, unless they arise right out of the life of the society. What is the *real* spiritual atmosphere of our average schools? Are we so far gone in paganism on the one hand, and so set in denominational compartments on the other hand, that the common worship of this heterogeneous school society can have no live significance? We need people sensitive to spiritual atmosphere, who will try honestly to ask and to answer this question for the schools they know.

It is not a question of what ideally a school society *ought* to do, but what with the materials given they can do. There will be many different answers to this question. For myself, I believe that most children are only a generation or two removed from some kind of Christian practice and that, therefore, the idea of Christian worship still lingers sufficiently in the family memory to form some sort of basis for school worship. Barring the militantly atheist families, whose liberty in bringing up their children must, of course, be safeguarded, the vast mass of families are not actively anti-Christian, but mainly indifferent, and amongst these it is noticeable that many still have a dim instinct for worship in special crises and on special occasions (e.g. a secular youth club's request for a carol service). I think we may start in school from the assumption that children mostly are not brought up in regular worship, but that worship is not entirely foreign to their experience, and that, if properly approached, they take to it gladly and naturally. The wrong approach is to assume that prayers are the

“done thing” and impose a set form from above. The right approach is to make worship a really exciting activity which “we all do,” closely related to and forming the climax of all school activity.

This means discussing its meaning fully and making it an activity planned and carried out in part at least by the children themselves. *Pace* Mr. Butler, I am not sure it would not be better to abandon the “daily dose” and concentrate on particular services of worship planned carefully for certain high-lights of school life and general festivals.

I put forward this basis for school worship very tentatively. Possibly the paganism of our general society is so definite that we have no right to maintain Christian worship in school against the general trend. Certainly our justification for it must rest entirely on the argument that the general spirit is not antagonistic and that there is something in the children’s experience on which it can be built. I do not, however, see how school worship can profitably be directed by a “humanist” teacher, and unless there is a Christian to build it up as a real and intelligible experience that crowns everyday life, I would rather see worship cut out and the “religious” education of the school thought of in terms of the common values outlined above.

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